

REMARKS

Claims 1-9, 11, 13 and 15 are pending. By this response, claims 1, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 are amended and claims 10, 12 and 14 are cancelled. Reconsideration and allowance based on the above amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of claims 3 and 10-15 as containing allowable subject matter and would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 6, 7 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Koto (US 6,463,101); claims 2, 4 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Koto and Fernando, et al. (International Conference on Image Processing) and Hurst (US 6,771,825); and claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Koto in view of Mutoh, et al. (US 6,631,210). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants note that by the above amendments, claims 1, 7 and 9 have been amended to include respectively, the features of dependent claims 10, 12 and 14 which are deemed to be allowable in the outstanding Office Action. Therefore, applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 7 and 9 are now in condition for allowance. Therefore, the rejections with regard to these claims and their respective dependent claims is now moot.

Further, applicants note that dependent claims 11, 13 and 15 have been amended to include the features of their respective independent claims 1, 7 and 9. Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 11, 13 and 15 are also in condition for allowance.

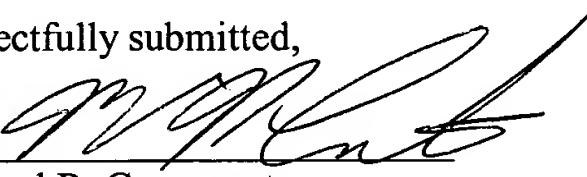
In view of the above, applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance. Prompt allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Chad J. Billings (Reg. No. 48,917) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: February 22, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By 

Michael R. Cammarata

Registration No.: 39,491

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

8110 Gatehouse Road

Suite 100 East

P.O. Box 747

Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000

Attorney for Applicant